

Minutes
Electron Microscopy Ad Hoc Review Group
San Antonio VA Medical Center
Friday, February 25, 2005

Committee Members Present:

David Howell
Guillermo A. Herrera
Sanford Roth
John Shelburne
Gurdip Sidhu
Allan J. Tucker

Other Meeting Attendees & Guests:

Alex Tuszynski

Welcome/Introductions (Dr. Shelburne)

Dr. Shelburne welcomed and thanked the members for their timely reviews of all the cases and for taking time to attend the meeting.

General Comments (Dr. Shelburne)

Dr. Rodriguez was not able to attend this meeting, but provided information listed below about recent developments and ongoing issues at the national level in VHA.

- **Nomination:** Dr. Rodriguez has been nominated to serve as President-elect for the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. Next year he will be the president of ASCP.
- **AFIP cytology laboratories:** AFIP has closed down their cytology laboratories and the Houston VA had agreed to serve as the national resource for the cytology consultations and Dr. Green is the contact person for that program. The new web based system for slide reviews allows additional information to be provided. Accordingly it was suggested that Dr. Shelburne write to the AFIP suggesting that they add Electron Micrographs when available. Also, AFIP should consider distributing cases on CD's, at least to those medical centers experiencing difficulty with web access (slow image acquisition speeds, etc.)
- **HQAP program:** Effective January 2005, the VA/Military histopathology quality assessment program, which is known as HQAP program, will no longer be mailed out to the participants. The HQAP program is available on the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology website. That's www.afip.org. Participants can access the HQAP program by going out on the AFIP web on our pathology services and selecting online education. But, in order to use the online pathology services, they must register for the course. We will be mailing out next year reminders for each quarter that the clinical histories and slides and discussions are available on the web site for the participants to review the cases and submit their diagnosis. At the end of January 2005 I will send out as I've always in the past the CME letters to

each participant. However in 2006 we will no longer be sending the CME's letters out. They will be available on line. And actually they are on line now.

- **Video teleconferences:** In addition to the HQAP cases that people can get, one can go on the AFIP web site at www.afip.org and get information on our video teleconferences. There's a conference bridge available but if you just want to get the audio version and download the Power Point slides from the presentation, you can do that under the "What's New" pull down menu on the left side of the screen on the opening page.
- **Hybrid Title 38 Legislation:** After many years of effort, Congress passed, and the President signed, legislation converting medical technologists (and some 20 other occupations) from Title 5 to Hybrid Title 38. The effect of this legislation will be to make the recruitment, hiring, and hopefully retention of medical technologists more efficient. Human Resources in VACO is actively preparing directives for the implementation of this new legislation. These new directives are due to the field by October 1, 2004. It is unfortunate that this legislation did not include the occupations of medical technician, clinical chemist, clinical microbiologist, and other related categories of laboratorians. Efforts will be made to try to accomplish the conversion of these occupations in future legislation.
- **VISTA Lab Re-engineering Project:** An update of the VISTA lab software package is of critical importance in order for the laboratory information management system to progress and to be adequate for the future of laboratory medicine in the VA. There are over 300 corrections and improvements pending for the existing system. In lieu of committing resources to continue to "patch" the existing system, the Office of Information Technology in VACO has already set up a Project Office (and designated a Project Manager) to begin the development of an entire new system. The Office of Management and Budget have approved an "Exhibit 300" for this project to proceed, and an oversight Program Office is in the process of being set up in the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service of Patient Care Services. There will be ongoing discussions and justifications for funding for this multiyear project, but I am optimistic that the outcome will meet the future needs of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine in the VA.
- **VISTA Blood Bank Software Revision Project:** Slow progress continues to be made on the development of a new VA Blood Bank software product. Since the Food and Drug Administration consider such a product a medical device, FDA approval must be obtained for the product. This requirement has added substantially to the development time and costs of the project. Currently FY06 is projected for completion of the project. The original completion date has been projected to be FY02.

- **Bioterrorism, Lab Preparedness, Lab Security, and Biosafety:** The Office of the Inspector General continues to have interest in the above issues as they relate to the clinical and research labs in the VA. While there are numerous existing Directives, accreditation standards, and other regulations currently in place (particularly concerning “select agents”), additional guidance will be forthcoming shortly for all Pathology and Laboratory Medicine labs in the VA to foster compliance with IG recommendations. This topic continues to be a regular agenda item on the monthly P&LMS conference calls.
- **Revised Laboratory Management Information Program (LMIP):** A significantly revised LMIP program has been implemented for FY04. These revisions will hopefully improve the submission of data along with more appropriate comparative statistics.
- **Standardization:** Efforts continue to identify lab commodities for standardization. Efforts are currently focused on occult blood testing cards. This committee remains active, and works in close association with the National Acquisition Center.
- **Promotion of Regional and National Reference Lab Services in the VA:** The FY04 VHA Strategic Plan includes a goal for the assessment of regionalized lab testing within the VA. While no specific resources are allocated to accomplish this, several VA labs do currently provide regional and national reference lab testing services. Through the monthly conference call, and via the VA P&LMS website, information regarding the services available from regional and national labs is being disseminated. The expected outcome is that VA reference lab testing services will be used in lieu of commercial reference lab testing as a cost saving initiative and to improve utilization of VA services.
- **Maintain Accreditation:** As always, efforts, through the Regional Commissioners program, continue to assure that all VA laboratories maintain and retain full accreditation from all appropriate agencies and organizations.
- **Improve patient safety:** A major initiative of the JCAHO this year is to improve patient safety. P&LMS fully supports this initiative, and is working within the VA to promote the development of a single platform using bar-coding and handheld devices to improve the processes of specimen collection, medication administration, and blood product administration to reduce errors and adverse events.

Overview of FY 2004 EM Program

- Dr. Shelburne reviewed the status of the VA EM program nationally and at several sites. There are now 19 active laboratories. An outline of the EM Program activities in 2004 is given below.

EM Program Visits

- No separate site visits made during reporting year

Pathology Field Advisory Committee Presentation

- Working group on bio terrorism (PLM&S) – Dr. Shelburne is a member of this group.

VISTA Lab Re-engineering project

- Alex Tuszynski is participating in this process and is on an advisory group to the Anatomic Pathology package as well as the overall general Laboratory package.

LOINC training initiative & Health Data Repository Project

- Alex Tuszynski is the VISN 6 LOINC Coordinator
- Alex Tuszynski serves as a VHA (P&LMS) LOINC liaison to Regenstrief Institute

EM Equipment transfers

- Advertised to all EM Programs via EM Web page about EM scopes possibly being available at closed EM Programs

EM Program Web Page

- The EM Program has a web page available on the VA intranet located at <http://vaww.lab.med.va.gov/em>
- In addition to EM Program information, documents and archived newsletters we also have links to other Electron Microscopy sites as well as teaching facilities that offer EM related courses. The EM web page is also available on the internet: <http://www.va.gov/DiagnosticEM/>
- The EM Web page emphasizes Microbiology and Microprobe analysis, providing information not readily available on other web sites and texts.

Ultrath XII - Barcelona

- A number of VA members participated in the Barcelona meeting.
- Ultrath XIII – Plans for 2006 in South Dakota – Again VA participation is expected
- Ultrath XIV - Plans are under way for 2008 in Greece

Greeting – Introductions: Dr. Shelburne greeted and thanked the panel members for their hard work and for taking time to attend the meeting. Dr. Shelburne announced that this is the last annual meeting he will organize. He talked with Dr. Rodriguez and they agreed that it was time for a change. We are asking Victor Roggli to take this meeting over next year. Alex will continue to coordinate the receipt of the annual reviews and will in general be doing the same work as in the past. So we don't anticipate a major change in the process but are confident that Dr. Roggli will have new ideas that will be good for the program basically. Next year we're still planning to have the meeting in conjunction with USCAP in New Orleans. Next year we may try for a meeting room on Friday at the convention Hotel rather than at the VA Medical Center as in the past few years.

Discussion of Specific Programs

Program closures and changes in EM Lab Directors were discussed. These discussions and the detailed case and program reviews noted below are summarized in the letter sent to each laboratory.

Scientific Program

Dr. Herrera gave a scientific presentation on Renal Amyloidosis. Dr. Herrera discussed in vitro models of amyloid formation studied by light microscopy, immunofluorescence, confocal imaging, transmission electron microscopy and ultrastructural Immunogold labeling. Dr. Herrera's research is directed at understanding the basic pathophysiology of amyloid formation, with the ultimate goal of designing therapeutic approaches to treating Amyloidosis.

Meeting adjourned:

We are planning to hold the next meeting of the EM annual review group in conjunction with the next USCAP meeting in New Orleans, LA during February 18-24, 2006. As stated earlier, we will try to obtain a meeting room for Friday, Feb. 17th at the USCAP meeting Hotel, the New Orleans Hilton instead of meeting at the VA Medical Center.